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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [KPAO](#)
SUBJECT: WEST BANK SETTLEMENT LEADERS FULMINATE ABOUT U.S.
POLICY

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Local West Bank settlement leaders expressed anger over a possible construction freeze in separate meetings with PolOff on September 2. Gush Etzion Regional Council Chairman Shaul Goldstein said he gave up on the YESHA Council after Gaza disengagement and is now organizing meetings and protests with other West Bank mayors. While he objected to any freeze on construction, Goldstein left open the door to negotiations over outpost removal. Ariel Mayor Ron Nachman was equally categorical in his rejection of a freeze, and urged USG and GOI leaders to come see the "reality" of Ariel firsthand. "If you don't recognize me, I don't recognize you," he added. A Jerusalem Post journalist appeared at the meeting with Nachman unannounced. PolOff limited her comments to pleasantries and to noting that the USG routinely meets with and listens to a broad range of interlocutors on settlement issues. End Summary.

Longtime Leader "Gives Up" On YESHA Council

¶2. (C) In separate meetings with PolOff on September 2, local settlement leaders expressed anger over the possibility of a freeze on settlement construction. Gush Etzion Regional Council chairman Shaul Goldstein said he gave up on the YESHA Council after Gaza disengagement, and because "it is not doing enough to stop a freeze (on settlement activity)." Instead, he said he has organized an initial meeting of regional mayors to protest a possible freeze, as well as outpost removal. Twelve of 24 West Bank settlement mayors attended the meeting, Goldstein said, and he expects that more will participate in future meetings and activities. The next event will be a protest in support of Ma'ale Adumim Mayor Benny Kashriel's planned E-1 cornerstone laying ceremony on September 7. Then, this informal group plans to attend a reception with Israeli Minister of Defense Barak and other GOI officials. "It will not just be a toast," Goldstein said, "we will make noise."

¶3. (C) Efforts continue to pressure the GOI, Goldstein said. In an August meeting between PM Netanyahu and four settlement leaders (Ma'ale Adumim mayor Benny Kashriel, Beit El's Moshe Rosenbaum, Ariel mayor Ron Nachman, and Goldstein), Goldstein said, "I told Bibi that we voted for him and he has to respect our needs. We can't afford a freeze - it is a declaration against our future."

¶4. (C) "If (Israeli and American politicians) come and talk to us, maybe we can negotiate," Goldstein added. He noted that the IDF and those GOI officials in charge of home evacuations do not talk to him or Gush Etzion residents

directly when they decide to issue demolition orders. "They just send messages before dismantling." Goldstein added that he and his constituency do not want a confrontation with the IDF. In the past, he noted, Gush Etzion residents agreed to voluntary dismantle some outposts that were served demolition orders.

Ariel Mayor: USG Should Focus On Other Issues

15. (C) In a separate meeting on September 2, Ariel Mayor Ron Nachman said pointedly, "We are angry about the freeze. We will use all measures to fight it." Nachman accused Israeli and American politicians of formulating policies without understanding realities on the ground. "They should come and see, then they will understand." (Note: A Jerusalem Post journalist joined the discussion with Nachman at his invitation -- Nachman gave PolOff no notice that he would do so -- and plans to report on the meeting. Consequently, Poloff was in receive mode only, except for pleasantries and to note that the USG routinely meets with and listens to a broad range of interlocutors on settlement issues. End Note.)
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